

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANILA 14853 240934Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 14853

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEAN, PGOV, RP
SUBJECT: US/ASEAN MINISTERIAL - NONROLE FOR MRS. MARCOS

1. SUMMARY. MRS. MARCOS INVITED HERSELF TO THE US/ASEAN MINISTERIAL AND SOUGHT A LEADING ROLE FOR HERSELF. SHE WAS NEATLY FINESSED OUT BY THE PHILDEL LED BY ROMULO, AND THERE IS APPREHENSION WITHIN PHIL MFA THAT SHE MAY "TAKE IT OUT ON ASEAN" FOR HAVING BEEN FRUSTRATED IN HER EFFORTS. END SUMMARY.

2. A MEMBER OF PHILDELEGATION HAS REVEALED TO EMBOFF THE PROBLEMS WHICH GENERAL ROMULO AND HIS STAFF HAD WITH MRS. MARCOS AND HER ENTOURAGE, ESPECIALLY HER BROTHER (KOKOY), DURING THE RECENT US/ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING. MRS. MARCOS WANTED TO BE THE GOP DELEGATION LEADER AS WELL AS THE ASEAN SPOKESPERSON, BUT A PRESIDENTIAL CABLE MADE HER ONLY A MEMBER OF THE DELEGATION AS MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND THEN RANKED HER THIRD AFTER ROMULO AND VIRATA.

3. ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS MRS. MARCOS DID WAS TO CALL FOR A MEETING OF ASEAN DELEGATIONS, AN ORDER WHICH ROMULO HAD HIS STAFF CARRY OUT. HOWEVER, NO ASEAN DELEGATE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANILA 14853 240934Z

SHOWED UP, AND THE FILIPINOS WERE ALONE TO FACE HER WRATH. SHE WAS IN A RAGE, IT WAS REPORTED.

4. IN THE MEANTIME, THE OTHER ASEAN DELEGATIONS PRESSED THE FILIPINOS TO BE SURE THAT MRS. MARCOS DID NOT USURP THE SPOKESMAN ROLE ASSIGNED TO ROMULO. MRS. MARCOS WANTED TO MAKE THE OPENING SPEECH AS WELL AS A NUMBER OF OTHER

INTERVENTIONS. HER STAFF BEGAN TO REVIEW THE TEXT OF ROMULO'S OPENING SPEECH AND TO SUGGEST CHANGES IN A DOCUMENT WHICH HAD BEEN CLEARED BY THE OTHER FOUR ASEAN GOVERNMENTS IN THE PREPARATORY MEETINGS.

5. PHILDEL STAFF DECIDED THAT THE ONLY WAY TO PREEMPT SUCH A ROLE BY MRS. MARCOS WAS TO WIDELY PUBLICIZE ROMULO'S SPEECH. ONE MEMBER WAS SENT BY SHUTTLE TO NEW YORK FROM WHERE THE TEXT COULD BE TELEGRAPHED BACK TO MANILA WITHOUT TAMPERING AND WHERE IT COULD BE REPRODUCED IN QUANTITY WITHOUT HINDRANCE. INTIMATION WAS THAT THE MANILA PERSONNEL DID NOT TRUST THE ROMUALDEZ-LED PHIL-EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. ROMULO'S SPEECH WAS THEREFORE RELEASED IN MANILA PRIOR TO DELIVERY, AND AMPLE COPIES WERE ALSO DISTRIBUTED IN ADVANCE IN WASHINGTON.

6. MRS. MARCOS APPARENTLY SENSED SHE WAS NOT WELCOME, AND SINCE SHE GOT NEITHER A MEETING OF ASEAN DELEGATIONS NOR A LEADING ROLE, SHE FLEW BACK TO NEW YORK. IN THE MEANTIME, HER STAFF SOUGHT BRIEFINGS FROM THE SMALL AND OVERWORKED PHILDEL STAFF UNTIL THE LATE MORNING HOURS. AS LATER PIECED TOGETHER, MRS. MARCOS WANTED A COMPLETE RUNDOWN ON THE MEETINGS SO THAT SHE COULD RAISE SPECIFIC ISSUES DURING THE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER.

7. THE MOTORCADE TO THE WHITE HOUSE, AFTER THE SECRE-
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PAGE 03 MANILA 14853 240934Z

TARIAT CAR, WAS LED BY THE ASEAN SPOKESMAN, THAT IS, ROMULO. KOKOY ROMUALDEZ PRESSURED THE PHILDEL STAFF TO ARRANGE THAT MRS. MARCOS RIDE FIRST, BUT ROMULO, FORTIFIED BY THE PRESIDENTIAL CABLE, DECIDED SHE SHOULD BE THIRD, AFTER VIRATA. AS IT WAS, MRS. MARCOS REFUSED TO RIDE IN THE MOTORCADE AND ARRIVED LATE FOR THE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. AS MATTER OF FACT, THE PRESIDENT WAS WELL INTO HIS OPENING STATEMENT WHEN SHE ARRIVED, BUT ROSE GRACIOUSLY TO WELCOME HER AND SEAT HER. NO OTHER PERSON STOOD UP, NOT IN DISRESPECT -- BUT BECAUSE OF UNCERTAINTY OF WHAT TO DO. THE PRESIDENT PROCEEDED WITH HIS STATEMENT AND THE MEETING WENT OFF WELL AND WITHOUT HER SPEAKING -- MUCH TO THE RELIEF OF THE PHIL-DEL.

8. PHILDEL SOURCE SENSES UNEASILY THAT MRS. MARCOS IS NOT TAKING KINDLY TO HER EXPERIENCES WITH THE US/ASEAN MEETING, PARTICULARLY SINCE THEY FOLLOW THE ROUGH HANDLING WHICH SHE FACED WITH HER CONGRESSIONAL CRITICS A FEW DAYS EARLIER. THERE IS EVEN APPREHENSION SHE MAY "TAKE IT OUT" ON ASEAN IN THE FUTURE.

9. AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT: FOREGOING SMACKS A BIT OF THE
"INSIDE STORY AS WITNESSED BY CARLOS P. ROMULO" ALTHOUGH WE
CANNOT SECOND GUESS ITS FACTUALNESS. (GENERAL HIMSELF HAS
- NATURALLY - MADE NO ALLUSION TO THIS BYPLAY. APPREHENSION
ABOUT IMELDA'S FUTURE POSTURE TOWARDS ASEAN STRIKES ME AS
OVERDRAWN. SHE HAS WAY OF INTIMIDATING PEOPLE BY IMPLYING
SOME UNSPEAKABLE ACT OF RETRIBUTION WILL FLOW FROM CROSSING
HER. BUT ASEAN DOESN'T PRESENT A VERY GOOD TARGET. MORE
LIKELY SHE WILL BE SATISFIED WITH FINDING APPROPRIATE
OCCASION SLIP FURTHER STILETTO INTO ROMULO. MURPHY

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